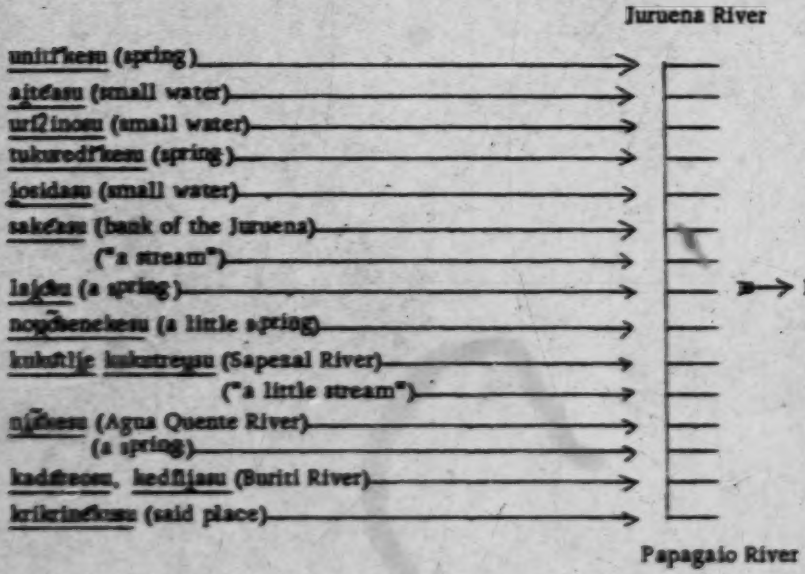

TRADITION

The Nambikwara have a sharp sense of tradition. We have read 173
above (p. 50) a remark of B1 which shows him to be sadly cognizant of the decline of his race. Customs and techniques are generally considered as [183 329]
legacies of the "ancestors":

58. irɛ̃hore ikɛ̃tage uʔttige.
"The ancestors taught us how to coil it [the ribbon of rubber meant for making a ball]" (b1).

One single legend was found relating to the origin of the universe. [120] 773 539
It is that of the Flood, the childrens' version of which we have already given. (1) Here is the text used by adults:

1. See above, p. 69.

59. nardɛ̃ne kɛ̃ʔtʃire
narukɛ̃nihire naukaurʔaure
nahɛ̃tende kɛ̃ŋgɔrage naukɛ̃do urʔere toɛ̃dige
the water had descended the water flooded everyone to die

●773 539 dẽinhe naĩkena kanaŋapẽndige
only an old woman escaped one day (?)
nãndige ẽĩdende kẽninde
to cry [she climbs on a buriti palm] buriti coco
iotũrige tanãamdage jãu jãu jãu
she throws [in the water] to wait to wait to wait [the water]
dehãndige untahãrige nihunĩndige tarahĩnarige ũĩtte
to dry to sleep the morning to be born to deliver child
talĩttige tothãndige ikãtotẽndige ikã̃ iõndige
to fall [from the stomach] to grow very quickly
to grow very quickly to grow
ndaŋre tamĩndige bãdige ũtaŋtu
[with its] mother to copulate two twins to be born
nĩndage ẽintalĩkero
of the marriage [and] having fallen again
ẽoni dẽinhaĩnenũnkero
of a man and woman married again
ẽẽtnarotunkero tãtalĩkero nliin
of a child large again who falls again the brothers
kĩtunkero dẽinla ẽĩna
to marry again another village
taminũkero bãĩkẽnaa
[having made] having copulated again two twins
dẽenũkero dẽlaŋniẽĩkero ainiminũnkero
again being born to make another village again to
inhabit again
ẽẽheni nũnakero bãĩŋininukero nliidnia
to make children again two children to make again the brothers
tununĩnkero ẽĩnikẽe tãminu tãminu
to marry again other men to beget to beget
dẽindia ẽĩna ĩãtore tamĩnĩãure tamin]otige
another village to build to beget to beget
ẽĩndige dẽinũkero ẽĩinũkero
to make love to have children again another village again
akuĩndige akuĩkero dẽidlaŋni ẽĩnta
going away going away again other villages
[121] keĩkuĩkero hãĩtẽ niriŋandi' aĩt]ẽ hũntniat]ẽ
others still far away to inhabit (?) all distant very distant
niĩntindnõŋi ĩũmaĩnddniani nigehãĩẽ
very distant to inhabit who do not know how to speak
others distant (?)

773
539

nãgatatnjãni ukuhajonetãtjena ukuajenthni
who do not know how to understand others who live so distant
[that it is necessary]
kanẽngore kanẽngore kanẽngore
that a moon end that a moon end that a moon end
uatlitnjãni (b1)
in order that they arrive.

The whole story can be summed up as follows: alone of all the 773
humans, one old woman succeeded in escaping the Flood by hanging to the top of a buriti palm. By letting some nuts fall from the palm into the water, she was able to measure the decline of the water, and when the ground was dry, she came down and was delivered of a son. Through an incestuous union with her son, she then gave birth to twins of different sex, and from their incestuous union was born a new generation of twins. Thus, the whole of humanity would be descended from a series of marriages between twins, each giving birth to a new couple. As men multiplied, new villages were founded, always further away. So much so that today men live at such distances from one another that they do not speak the same language, do not understand one another, and must travel for whole months in order to visit.

This version offers several points in common with others collected in distant regions of South America. It is doubtless necessary to interpret the throwing of the palm nuts in the light of the "magical projection" 773
which has been studied above. (1) The throwing of small nuts certainly 171

1. Cf. p. 96.

possesses a magic significance. The same episode is found in several versions of the legend of the Flood, (2) and its magical value is formally attested

2. Cf. for example the Tupi version collected by Thevet, cited by Métraux, loc. cit., p. 45.

for the Ŝipaia by Nimuendaju. (3) In older versions, the old woman (since

3. To kill the sun by throwing upon it small nuts of the palm tree anaja, thus introducing night upon the earth ("Sagen der Tembe Indianern," Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Vol. 47, 1915, p. 296).

In older versions, the old women (since
the old women share the magic powers of the men among the Nambikwara 773 171
as also in other tribes) (4) was undoubtedly not content with measuring the [789]

4. Cf. above, p. 101.

fall of water by the duration of the fall of her nuts, she actually provoked it [539]
by throwing them. Whatever the case may be, "magical projection" is
probably found at the origin of the theme of the throwing of small fruits or
grains in South American folklore.

[122] PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDES

The Nambikwara offer the observer a very special psychological 157
and moral aspect, and one which we have not found again either among
their immediate neighbors--Paressi, tribes of Guaporé, and Tupi of the
Gi-Parana--or among other South American tribes. It is worth an attempt
to separate its principal characteristics. Few of the primitive South
Americans display so much spontaneity and freedom in their behavior. Few
manifest such ease in psychological relationships, and such grace of ex-
pression. Thus, in their relationships with the ethnologist, the informants
introduce formulae which constitute true sociological inventions in order to 157
respond to a new situation, on the part of individuals who do not use either 571
a formula of greeting or of leave-taking in their own social relationships:

60. tai undejremiẽ ta eikiredniẽ uɔ̃ jiren undetniẽ
tatjene uɔ̃ iritjani. (b1)
I am going to sleep, I am going away, you go to sleep,
I will stay, you go away.

Or to put an end to an interrogation of which they are weary:

61. iejtlana amnentiẽ hikonarijna iatjeny amdeniẽ
konahdiay jedetniẽ. (b1)
This is useless, it must be left; one does not see
clearly any more, this is useless, let us leave it;
tomorrow we will talk.

Or again:

62. nakanajõnjani nihin nalirjani. (b1)
I have forgotten, wait till I remember.

Their daily life is full of exuberance. It is not only in the games 157
of ball that one hears joyous exclamations: 521

2: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939)1948
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

particular form of their own. Death is identified with these spirits. Men's souls are believed to be reincarnated as jaguars, whereas women's and children's souls are taken away by wind and thunder, never to return.

The highest being is the Thunder, with which any man, though usually a shaman, may have personal contact through revelations and visions. Women, however, except when very old, and children are deprived of these privileges. Women are also forbidden, under pain of death, to see the sacred flageolets (see Musical Instruments, p. 368) played at the ceremonies marking the beginning and the end of the dry season.

SHAMANISM AND MEDICINE

The shaman is sometimes distinct from—but more frequently identified with—the political chief. He is distinguished by having the privilege of polygyny, playing the leading role in ceremonial life, and possessing special supernatural powers. He treats patients by sucking out the disease or by fighting it with small ritual arrows called "thunder-arrows."

In addition to magical cures, the *Nambicuara* treat sickness with numerous medicinal plants, which are used externally or internally according to the disease. For eye infection, which is very frequent, they apply the infusion of a special bark with the help of a container made of leaves.

FOLKLORE, LORE, AND LEARNING

The only legend recorded by Lévi-Strauss (n.d. b) is a flood tale relating the destruction of human life and its re-creation through several incestuous marriages between the offspring of an old woman, who was the only being who escaped the disaster.

The only basic numbers used for counting are one and two, but the natives can reckon higher figures by combining these.

Colors are classified differently according to the dialects. The *Eastern, Central, Southern,* and *Western Nambicuara* agree in putting yellow and green in the same category, whereas the *Northern* group identify red and yellow, and class green, blue, and black together.

Some *Nambicuara* groups call stars by the same name which designates the spirits. The year is divided into two seasons and an undetermined number of lunar months. The day includes six main stages, each based on the position of the sun. Space is divided into two sections that are perpendicular to each other, one corresponding to the apparent movement of the sun and the other to the direction of the main waterways.

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291 Around the waist both men and women wear a buriti cord; if possible, this string is strung with glass store beads. In addition, men sometimes suspend a lenth of buriti fiber from the front of the belt.

302 Men paint their faces with urucú, drawing a band from each side of the forehead down to the chin, another band across the eyes and bridge of the nose, and then a band from under each eye across the cheeks. On the body they draw two stripes, starting from the abdomen up to the nipples and then over to each shoulder. The arms and legs are dotted with red or black spots. The hair is seldom smeared with urucú.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

(See chart 12) $\frac{1}{A}$

619 The names of the Eastern Nambicuara bands
621 appear to be derived from characteristics peculiar to the band territory. The Waklítisu are cayman people for there are many caymans (*waklítsu*) in their territory. The Elótasu are open plains people, for they live on the open plain (*tátu*) of the upper Camararé River. The Kitánhlu get their name from a small fruit called *tsatu*. The Chiwtisu are bee people from the word *wuiru*, bee. The Hégndisu are buriti fruit (*héru*) people. Although these bands are not politically united under a single chief, and sometimes even resort to open conflict, they consider themselves a single people, or as Julio phrased it, "We can speak with one another and we came from the same hole in the stone mountain."

619 The origin myth of the Eastern Nambicuara, as
●773 it is told among the Waklítisu band, can be summarized as follows:

Before the Nambicuara came there were only animals, birds, plants, and beings who could change from animal and bird to human form. At that time the Nambicuara were inside a stone mountain called *pakatadurubatá*, which is situated north of the telegraph line near Campos Novos (roughly in the center of the territory now occupied by the Eastern Nambicuara). One day the monkeys heard people speaking inside the mountain and went to tell ehlíkdilisu who changed himself into a black and white woodpecker and flew with all his strength against the mountain. When the mountain broke some were killed and some injured but many came out alive. The ghosts of the dead people remained around the mountain where they still are and where all Nambicuara go after they die. The injured people ehlíkdilisu sent into the bush, but the people who were sound of body he put into good clean places and gave them the pieces bow and taught them how

2/2 [Cat. 116, p. 123.—Haskell] [p. 96 (A)]

4: Oberg E-5 (1949) 1953
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

619 to grow manioc and sweetpotatoes. He also gave them the flute (*udárku*), and taught them how to sing and
•773 dance. *Ohlálólilau* is thus the culture hero of the Nambicuara. In human form he looks like a Nambicuara Indian, wears ornaments in his ears, nose, and upper lip and paints himself with urucú. Yet today people no longer see *ohlálólilau*, for he has gone away. They do not have rituals connected with him, nor do the shamans solicit his aid. But the stone mountain from which the Nambicuara came is still recognized as the place of the dead. On ceremonial occasions the ghosts of the ancestors come to the encampments and villages from the mountain, returning after they have been given food.

622 Although every band has a leader or chief it is not quite certain whether these leaders get their positions through succession or by personal strength and prestige. Julio claimed that he is headman because his father was a headman, but the other members of the Wakítisu band claim that the strongest man is always the leader by common agreement. The Nambicuara appear to value two qualities in a man—"a strong body" and "a strong mouth." The chief is like a tapir (*sílasu*) which is the strongest of the animals; thus, a chief is called *silasúdisaru*. A shaman gains power by talking or by having "a strong mouth," as the Nambicuara say. The strongest man is one who combines these qualities and is at once a strong man and shaman—he becomes an important chief.

The survival of the band, the Nambicuara believe, depends upon the *silasúdisaru*. He is the hunt leader, the head farmer, the one who organizes trade between the bands, the ceremonial head, the war leader, and the settler of disputes. Every successful chief is supposed to have four wives but otherwise has nothing to distinguish him from the rest of the tribesmen.

619 Relationships between the bands of the Eastern Nambicuara are characterized by intermarriage, trade, occasional joint ceremonies, and wife stealing and consequent armed conflicts. Intermarriage occurs when cross cousins are not available for marriage within the band. The Chiwíisu and Hágudisu obtain pots from the Western Nambicuara in exchange for wax, feather ornaments, beads, and bows and arrows. These pots they in turn exchange with the Eastern Nambicuara bands for knives, axes, and tin cans.

[582] 438 619

When one band wants to meet another in order to exchange goods the approach is made in a very formal manner. The approaching band stops

[p. 96 (B)]